Lucy Snowe's Obscure English Identity in the Globalizing World of the Nineteenth Century in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*

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In the nineteenth century, with the development of technology and transportation networks, a lot of English women studied abroad more easily to improve their accomplishments. Charlotte Brontë is also one of them, and she experienced studying in Brussels, Belgium, twice between 1842 to 1843. After her return to England, she wrote *The Professor* (1857) and *Villette*[1] (1853) which are based on her experiences in Brussels. *The Professor* was written in 1846, and this is her first novel, though it was published after her death. *Villette* is her last finished novel. There is a clear distinction between the two works. While the protagonist in *The Professor*, William Crimsworth reaffirms his Englishness in a foreign country, the heroine of *Villette*, Lucy Snowe, is always 'metaphorically a foreigner' in England and Villette, the capital of the kingdom of Labassecour.[2] From William Crimsworth's and Lucy Snowe's different changes of consciousness as foreigners on the Continent, Brontë's view of Englishness and the world changed during the five or six years after she wrote *The Professor*.

In *Villette*, we can observe Lucy's consciousness of Englishness and her comparisons between England and a foreign country, but she tends to acclimate herself to new surroundings on foreign soil. Compared to William's awareness of Englishness which he re-realises, Lucy's identity becomes blurrier when she goes to the Continent compared to her childhood in England. She wanders in England and in Villette like an exile. Edward W. Said defines this term: '[e]xiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past'.[3] While she is conscious of the world by crossing the English Channel, she begins to be strongly aware of home. In the globalizing world of the nineteenth century, the cosmopolitan cities of London and Villette make homeless Lucy aware of her identity problems.

Lucy's identity is faint from her childhood in England. In the first three chapters, Lucy narrates human relationships in the home of the Brettons. At the beginning of

Villette, Charlotte Brontë does not describe the detail of Lucy's background: her family, descent, and class. When she is fourteen, Lucy stays at the Brettons in the 'ancient town of Bretton' (5). She mainly focuses on the Brettons and a precocious girl, Paulina Mary, who comes to the Brettons during Lucy's stay there. Louisa Bretton is Lucy's godmother, and she has a son, Graham, who becomes a doctor in Villette. Lucy observes how they spend their time and what conversation they have. For example, the narrator, Lucy often delineates how Graham frequently makes fun of Paulina to attract her attention. In the peaceful home, she always keeps a distance from the Brettons and Paulina who seem happy. Elizabeth K. Haller says 'it is at Bretton that we are given the initial development of Lucy's personality'.[4] But the readers cannot perceive her identity or the formative process of her identity in her childhood, because the description of her character is not sufficient at the beginning. Brontë reveals the protagonist's details in her other novels, but here she does not.

In her childhood, Lucy does not need to explain herself to other people in the familiar town because they know well who she is. She lives in comfort under the protection of Mrs. Bretton. She feels her stability beside Mrs. Bretton, so she narrates, '[t]ime always flowed smoothly for me at my godmother's side; not with tumultuous swiftness, but blandly, like the gliding of full river through a plain' (6). There is no 'excitement of incidents' in her life in the town (6), but she is satisfied with her status quo in the Brettons. She does not face any special situation there in which she is conscious of her identity or she must prove her identity.

Lucy is not involved in the image of home from the beginning of this narrative. She spends at the Brettons 'about twice a year' (5). The story starts in the Brettons when she is fourteen. According to her narration, at this time, her 'permanent residence' is her kinsfolk's house. But as Mrs. Bretton predicts something ominous will happen to Lucy there, Mrs. Bretton takes Lucy along to her home. Mrs. Bretton is an affectionate woman, and she treats Lucy like a member of her own family. Lucy says, 'I was a good deal noticed by Mrs. Bretton' (5). Although the Brettons is a warm and loving family, Mrs. Bretton after all, only a godmother to Lucy, so her sense of responsibility is limited. As I stated above, this narrative begins with Lucy's life at the Brettons, and she does not depict her life with her family. In other words, Lucy is alienated from this

image of home, and Brontë reinforces Lucy's homelessness by describing Lucy's distance from other people at the Brettons, even though she lives in contentment there.

The narrative focusing on Lucy's life starts from chapter IV, and she narrates how she lives after leaving the Brettons. Lucy's peaceful life is changed to disquietude because of her family or kinsfolk's death during 'the next eight years' (35). With a metaphor of 'a bark', she says to the readers, 'I will permit the reader to picture me […] as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass—the steersman stretched on the little deck, his face up to heaven, his eyes closed' (35). She often likens her life to a voyage in *Villette*. Her peaceful narration makes the readers imagine her tranquil life, but she discloses her unfortunate circumstances with a figurative description of a shipwreck.

> However, it cannot be concealed that […] I must somehow have fallen overboard, or that there must have been wreck at last. […] [A] heavy tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved was taken away. In fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished. (35)

In this passage, the readers guess the death of Lucy's family members or kinsfolks. '[T]he crew' means her family or relatives here. She does not make clear what misfortune comes to her, but this incident makes Lucy homeless. From the beginning of *Villette*, she is out of home because she spends her time in other people's home, the Brettons. The introductory chapters allude to her homelessness. Furthermore, the unfortunate event in above passage emphasizes that she becomes more apart from home.

Brontë does not give Lucy a home to which she may return, and Lucy becomes homeless in her hometown. Even Mrs. Bretton has already left the 'ancient town of Bretton' (5) with her son when Lucy loses her family.

> Of Mrs. Bretton I had long lost sight. Impediments, raised by others, had, years ago, come in the way of our intercourse, and cut it off. Besides, time had brought changes for her too: the handsome property of which she was

> left guardian for her son, and which had been chiefly invested in some joint-stock undertaking, had melted, it was said, to a fraction of its original amount. Graham, I learned from incidental rumours, had adopted profession; both he and his mother were gone from Bretton, and were understood to be now in London. (35-6)

Lucy has no one who she can rely on. Therefore she notices that 'there remained no possibility of dependence on others' (36). Her homeless and wandering life begins, and she has no choice but to make her livelihood by herself.

Fortunately, Miss Marchmont, 'a maiden lady' of fortune (36), gives Lucy the first job in Lucy's life. She lives in Lucy's vicinity, so she hears of Lucy's 'bereaved lot' (36). Lucy also knows about Miss Marchmont by hearsay, though she has never seen her till then. Miss Marchmont makes a job offer to Lucy because she, who suffers from rheumatism, looks for her companion to nurse her. In view of the fact that Miss Marchmont proposes to give a job to Lucy, hearing of Lucy's unfortunate situation, Miss Marchmont already places some trust in the Snowes. Therefore, Lucy is hired by Miss Marchmont without proving who she is or what skills she has to work. For Lucy with no one she can depend on, there is hope for earning her living.

Lucy gradually comes to shut herself in a restricted space under Miss Marchmont. Once she stays at the house of Miss Merchmont as her companion, Lucy narrates that '[t]wo hot, close rooms' become her world and Miss Marchmont becomes '[her] mistress, [her] friend, [her] all' (37). Lucy is content with this limited world in which there is no need for her identity. She forgets even that 'there [a]re fields, woods, rivers, seas, an ever-changing sky outside the steam-dimmed lattice of this sick-chamber' (37). Moreover, she continues that '[t]ame and still by habit, disciplined by destiny, I demanded no walks in the fresh air' (37). Gilbert and Gubar say, '[b]ecause Lucy prizes the morsel of affection she receives, she is almost content to subsist on an invalid's diet, almost content to be Miss Marchmont'.[5] In this closed world, she loses mental and physical energy to go out, and she can gain her livelihood without the consciousness of her identity among others.

Lucy's mistress, however, dies after several months, and Lucy is thrown out into

the outside world again. She must look for 'a new place' to live (43). After leaving the residence of Miss Marchmont, Lucy explains her social position at that time.

> The possessor, then, of fifteen pounds; of health though worn not broken, and of a spirit in similar condition; I might still, in comparison with many people, be regarded as occupying an enviable position. An embarrassing one it was, however, at the same time; as I felt with some acuteness on a certain day, of which the corresponding one in the next week was to see my departure from my present abode, while with another I was not provided. (43)

Lucy has some money to live alone for a while because Miss Marchmont's second cousin pays Lucy her wages after the funeral. Therefore, she will not suffer from extreme poverty immediately. But she must leave the house because of her mistress' death. She is faced with homeless life again.

A bold idea to go outside her hometown suddenly bursts upon Lucy when she is worried about her future. Lucy visits Mrs. Barrett, 'an old servant of [her] family' and her nurse (43), to ask her for advice about Lucy's life, but Mrs. Barrett has no idea what Lucy should do for her future. After visiting Mrs. Barrett, she hears the voice in her mind says, 'Leave this wilderness' and 'go out hence' (44). She asks the voice, 'Where?' (44). The answer is London. The next day, she visits Mrs. Barrett again to tell her plan to go to London. Mrs. Barrett tells 'the address of a respectable old-fashioned inn in the city' (45) at which Lucy's uncles often stayed before. The readers can guess the Snowes belonged to a class above middle class, because the Snowes kept servants and their relatives could stay at an elegant hotel. Thanks to the uncles' reputation, she can prove her social position to a waiter who knew them at the hotel in London. Therefore, the waiter changes his inhospitable attitude, and comes to treat her as a lady. Simultaneously, by visiting London, she faces a situation in which she has to be conscious of her own identity.

In London, Lucy comes to be conscious of her identity by facing the differences between the large city and her hometown. First, as soon as she arrives at London, she

realises English in London differs from that of her birthplace. She says, '[w]hen I left the coach, the strange speech of the cabmen and others waiting around, seemed to me odd as a foreign tongue' and 'I had never before heard the English language chopped up in that way' (45). Lucy perceives the differences of English by visiting the new place for the first time away from her hometown and the familiar town, Bretton. As Gilbert and Gubar say, she is 'metaphorically a foreigner even in England'.[6] As she travels alone, she has to overcome the language barrier by herself. Lucy 'manage[s] to understand and to be understood' (46), and she arrives at the hotel whereof she has the address. In London she is just a lonely traveller, and she has no one who knows her and vouches her identity there. About her feeling at this time, she narrates that '[h]ow difficult, how oppressive, how puzzling seemed my plight!' (46). In addition, she says, '[i]n London for the first time; at an inn for the first time; tried with travelling; confused with darkness; palsied with cold; unfurnished with either experience or advice to tell me how to act, and yet—to act obliged' (46). In her hometown, she mingled only with her acquaintances who protected her, but there is no one patronizes her in the large city. Therefore, in London, she feels that she is an outsider, and coincidentally, that she is no sure that she can survive.

The days in London make Lucy's social position clearer than her childhood in her hometown. For instance, Lucy describes a chambermaid as 'a pattern of town prettiness and smartness' (46). Lucy thinks that '[h]er speech ha[s] an accent which in its mincing glibness seemed to rebuke [hers] as by authority', and that 'her spruce attire flaunt[s] an easy scorn at [her] plain country garb' (46). Lucy notices the maid despises her because of the maid's urbane attitude and clothes. In other words, those who serve Lucy identify her social position at first by her appearance and dress. She guesses that they mistake her as a servant at first. As to unfamiliar people evaluating her, Lucy understands their judgement, thinking that 'it can't be helped, […] and then the scene is new, and the circumstances' (46). She never complains to them about their attitudes, and she continues to take a quiet attitude towards 'this arrogant little maid' and a 'parsonic-looking, blackcoated, white-neckclothed waiter' (46). As a result, their inhospitality changes to the courteous treatment. She does not reveal her social position, but we can infer it through her behavior seemingly of a person of a high class.

Moreover, Lucy's uncles' names play an important role in her gaining social confidence. In London, no one knows her, and everyone looks on her with distrust. However, a waiter's inhospitable attitude changes to respectfulness when he hears the names of Lucy's uncles. She tells the waiter who has been working at the inn for twenty years her uncle's names, Charles and Wilmot, who visited frequently there fifteen years ago. Consequently, he recalls the uncles, and according to Lucy, '[a] ready and obliging courtesy now replaced his former uncomfortably doubtful manner' (48). Because her social position is proven, his suspicious attitude is vanished, and he treats her politely. Hence, Lucy shows to the readers that she does not have a low social position. Brontë suggests that the social position is one of essential elements to live a comfortable life, and decide one's attitude towards other people.

While Lucy proves to the staff at hotel her social standing by her quiet manner and the status of her uncles, in reality, Lucy has to confront her present situation. When she takes a rest at her room in the hotel, she suffers from 'a terrible oppression' (46).

> […] as I sat down by the bed and rested my head and arms on the pillow, a terrible oppression overcame me. All at once my position rose on me like a ghost. Anomalous, desolate, almost blank of hope, it stood. What was I doing here alone in great London? What should I do on the morrow? What prospects had I in life? What friends had I on earth? Whence did I come? Whither should I go? What should I do? (46)

Even though she can gains credit because of her uncles' name, she is lonely in London and she understands that she has nothing: family, friends, property, or skills to work. She mourns her own identity and anxiety about her future with no hope. Lucy is not relieved from the suffering only by the prestige of her uncles.

However, Lucy starts to feel her own life by visiting London, though she faces issues of her identity and future. She suddenly senses 'as if I, who had never yet truly lived, were at last about to taste life' (48). In her hometown, Lucy was under the protection of her family, kinfolks, and the Brettons, so the safety and stability of her life were secure there. Although she feels uneasiness and loneliness in London, at the same

time, she comes to have an ambition to live by herself. Dressing herself, Lucy says, 'I did well to come [to London.] […] I like the spirit of this great London which I feel around me. Who but a coward would pass his whole life in hamlets, and for ever abandon his faculties to the eating rust of obscurity?' (48). She believes that she has an opportunity to display her ability in this city.

Facing various aspects of London, she gets excitement that she has never felt before in her hometown. For the first time, she perceives and appreciates what London really is, walking in the city. She explains about 'an adventure' in London (49) as follows.

> I knew not how—I got into the heart of city life. I saw and felt London at last: I got into the Strand; I went up Cornhill; I mixed with the life passing along; I dared the perils of crossings. […] Since those days, I have seen the West-end, the parks, the fine squares; but I love the city far better. The city seems so much more in earnest: its business, its rush, its roar, are such serious things, sights, and sounds. The city is getting its living […] in the city you are deeply excited. (49)

For Lucy, the wandering around London is the first experience for her to see another world. The busy mercantile capital differs from the peaceful and tranquil places, her hometown and Bretton. The Metropolis gives her the sensation that she is actually living. By confronting the differences between the city and her hometown, she feels excitement in her mind and vitality of the city in the new place out of her hometown.

Before Brontë wrote *Villette*, she visited London and went to the Great Exhibition. She admired the Exhibition when she went to the Crystal Palace. In a letter to her father, Patrick Brontë, she described the Exhibition as 'a mighty Vanity Fair', using adjectives like 'very fine, gorgeous, animated, bewildering'.[7] We can know, in this letter, her surprise, puzzlement, and excitement in the Great Exhibition.

When Brontë went to the Crystal Palace again, she felt the excitement which differs from the vague feeling in her first visiting. She showed an interest in the commercial world. In her other letter to her father, about the second visit there, she wrote, '[…] I was more struck with it on this occasion than at my first visit. It is a

wonderful place—vast, strange, new, and impossible to describe. Its grandeur does not consist in *one* thing, but in the unique assemblage of *all* things', explaining about 'human industry'.[8] When she saw the display of 'railway engines and boilers', 'mill-chimney', 'the most gorgeous work of the goldsmith and silversmith', 'real diamonds and pearls' and so on, she felt '[i]t seems as if magic only could have gathered this mass of wealth from all the end of the earth'.[9] Vlasta Vranjes explains that '[t]he Great Exhibition of 1851 materialized Victorian liberal ideals: its organizers and supporters heralded the first "World Fair" as a sign of world peace and a celebration of free trade, the progress of all humans, and international brotherhood'.[10] Brontë experienced cosmopolitanism in the Exhibition, and felt the network of the world. She was interested in and excited by the commodities and the mercantile world in the Exhibition.

In contrast to the excitement, however, she also 'wonder[s] the Londoners don't tire a little of this vast Vanity Fair'.[11] For Brontë, a Yorkshirewoman, London showed the different aspects from her hometown's. While she admired the Great Exhibition, she ironically called London 'Vanity Fair'. She observed the city ambivalently. She had been to London several times, but this experience in London, in *Villette*, gave Brontë a motif of Lucy's interest in the mercantile society that Brontë could not describe in *The Professor*.

After a stay at London, Lucy decides to leave there and to cross the English Channel. When she determines to make the journey to the Continent, she is clearly aware that she is homeless.

> My state of mind, and all accompanying circumstances, were just now such as most to favour the adoption of a new, resolute, and daring—perhaps desperate—line of action. I had nothing to lose. Unutterable loathing of a desolate existence past forbade return. If I failed in what I now designed to undertake, who, save myself, would suffer? If I died far away from—*home*, I was going to say, but I had no home—*from* England, then, who would weep? (50, italics mine)

In this passage, it is obvious that Lucy is homeless. She accepts that she has 'no home'

to return and no family that waits for her. Therefore she decides to leave her hometown and her home country forever, even if she will 'suffer' in her future as she has 'nothing to lose'. Gilbert and Gubar explain that 'Lucy will have to seek her identity on foreign soil because she is metaphorically a foreigner even in England'.[12] Karen Lawrence also says, 'Lucy searches for some kind of significance in her life' because she has 'nothing'.[13] For Lucy, crossing the English Channel is a step not only to find her way of life but also to escape from her present situation in which she has 'nothing'.

When Lucy leaves London, she takes a ship where she encounters the image of home. There are three families, and they reinforce her feeling of alienation from home. Firstly, she watches 'a strange pair' of a stewardess and her son, a young steward (51). The mother and son work on the ship, and Lucy sees the mother writing 'a letter home' to her father (51). Lucy narrates that the mother is '[h]ard, loud, vain and vulgar' and seems 'brazen and imperishable' (52). In addition, Lucy watches a lively family, the Watsons. They are 'doubtless rich people' and they have 'the confidence of conscious wealth in their bearing' (52). After the observation of the Watsons, she turns her attention to an English gentleman and his daughter. The father comes to the port to see his daughter off to the Continent. The atmosphere of these three families emphasise Lucy's homelessness because only she is a lonely traveller on the ship.

Observing Ginevra Fanshaw who bids farewell to her father, Lucy thinks about the English national character. She explains about the Englishness:

> Foreigners say that it is only English girls who can thus be trusted to travel alone, and deep is their wonder at the daring confidence of English parents and guardians. As for the "jeunes Miss," by some their intrepidity is pronounced masculine and "inconvenant," others regard them as the passive victims of an educational and theological system which wantonly dispenses with proper "surveillance." (53)

Lucy becomes conscious of Englishness from viewpoint of foreign people. She explains the Englishness objectively using the French words. In the nineteenth century, it was not unusual that an English girl, who longed to be a governess, went to the Continent to

get higher education. To study abroad was an advantage when becoming a governess. Therefore, it is natural that Ginevra crosses the English Channel alone. As many Victorian girls do, Ginevra goes to a girls' boarding school on the Continent. According to Lucy, foreigners criticise it is only English girls to travel abroad alone, and they are amaze at their parents' 'daring confidence'. Moreover, they sympathise with English girls' travelling alone because they are victim of the educational system in England, which dispenses with surveillance of teachers and parents. On the ship for the Continent, Lucy is conscious that she is going outside of England.

Ginevra talks to Lucy about the obscurity of her religious identity on the vessel. She says that she forgets her religion because she has often changed from school to school in the Continent.

> I have quiet forgotten my religion; they call me a Protestant, you know, but really I am not sure whether I am one or not: I don't well know the difference between Romanism and Protestantism. However, I don't in the least care for that. I was a Lutheran once at Bonn […] (54)

Although she is an English and a Protestant, she has no firm religious belief. Her religion, one of the elements to mold her character, is obscure because she has some opportunities to live in different religious regions and has accepted Lutheranism. In her cosmopolitan life, Ginevra loses her own religious identity, but she is satisfied with the situation.

In Villette, Lucy gets a job of teaching English in a girls' boarding school, thanks to her English identity. Lucy is hired by Madame Beck who is looking for an English governess. Madame Beck respects 'Angleterre' especially, and wants to make an English woman look after her children. In the mid-nineteenth century, Belgium, the model of Labassecour, had a close relationship with England. According to Pieter François, '[d]uring the 1830s, Belgium was increasingly considered to be the first bridgehead of the British system on the Continent, as it had adopted a constitutional monarchy, chosen a king closely associated with Britain and had experienced a rapid industrialisation'.[14] Therefore, Belgium was regarded as 'a little Britain / England on the

Continent'.[15] It is natural that Madame Beck shows her respect for England or English people.

Lucy feels that she is an outsider in the cosmopolitan city and the school of which students are 'girls of almost every European nation' (82). On the day of 'madame's fête', observing the students' gorgeous dresses, she narrates that '[i]n beholding this diaphanous and snowy mass, I well remember feeling myself to be a mere shadowy spot on a field of light' (131). She thinks herself 'shadowy spot' in the girls who wear bright dresses, and she is aware that she differs from them. She calls herself 'shadow' repeatedly, though her name, Lusy Snowe, remind us of a bright and white woman. In addition, she tends to wear a dress of gray like a shadow, and a purple-gray which is 'the colour, in short, of dun mist, lying on a moor in bloom' (131). She feels 'at home and at ease' by putting on the dark dress. Her identity becomes hazier and dimmer among the bright girls of the Continent.

Ginevra Fanshaw argues that Lucy has nothing, and looks down on Lucy's situation. She is proud that she is 'the daughter of a gentleman of family', that she is young, that she has had 'a continental education', and that she is pretty (145). She explains the difference between them, and 'how happy [she is], and how miserable [Lucy is]' (145). She says, 'you are nobody's daughter. […] you have no relations; you can't call yourself young at twenty-three; you have no attractive accomplishments—no beauty' (146). Lucy does not object against Ginevra, and says, '[a] good deal of it is true as gospel' (146). Not only she but also others recognise that she has nothing and a cipher. Though Lawrence insists that she went out of England to escape from her present situation in which she had 'nothing',[16] she remains nothing yet even since she came to the Continent.

From the aspect of language, Lucy's English identity becomes obscure. When she arrives on the Continent, she cannot speak French, and she does not possess 'a phrase of speaking French' (61). Therefore she feels 'it was French, and French only, the whole world seemed now gabbling round me' (61-2). She studies the language hard because she cannot live without the language and no one understands her in Villette. She learns it and as a result, students start to accept her.

> By degree, as I acquired fluency and freedom in their language, and could make such application of its more nervous idioms as suited their case, the elder and more intelligent girls began rather to like me, in their way […] (84)

Her knowledge of French language helps her to be understood by the foreign girls. Moreover, Paul often asks her to speak in French. In *The Professor*, William forces Anglo-Swiss woman, Frances Evans Henri, to speak in English in Brussels. In Villette, Lucy has no choice but to study French, and she 'is literally deprived of her language' unlike William.[17] As she assimilates herself to the cosmopolitan city, even her identity in language also becomes vague.

Although Ginevra regards Lucy as a friend since they met on the ship, sometime after they know each other, she asks Lucy, 'who are you?'. When she knows that Lucy is acquainted with Home de Bassompierre and his daughter Paulina Mary, she wonders about Lucy's true background. M. de Bassompierre is Ginevra's uncle, and he is an earl and rich. For Ginevra, it is strange that the man of social eminence and Lucy, a cipher, know each other. Therefore, Ginevra asks Lucy repeatedly, 'Who are you, Miss Snowe?' and 'are you anybody?' (307-309). Ginevra tries to verify who Lucy is, using words like 'nobody', 'somebody' and 'anybody' (308-309). Lucy is 'so peculiar and so mysterious' for Ginevra (309). However, Lucy answers that she is 'once an old lady's companion, then a nursery-governess, now a school-teacher' (309). In fact, for Lucy, she 'has nothing' and there is no other word to describe herself.

Ginevra's query about Lucy's identity makes clear that people around Lucy cannot understand her identity. Ginevra asks Lucy about her social position, and says, 'you and I should now be much on a level, visiting in the same sphere; having the same connection' (307). Lucy explains how Ginevra judges others' identity.

> […] proving, by her obstinate credulity, or incredulity, her incapacity to conceive how any person not bolstered up by birth or wealth, not supported by some consciousness of name or connection, could maintain an attitude of reasonable integrity. As for me, it quite sufficed to my mental tranquility that I was known where it imported that known I should be […]. The World, I

> soon learned, held a different estimate: and I make no doubt, the World is very right in its view, yet believe also that I am not quite wrong in mine. (309)

There is a difference in criterion to judge other's identity between 'the World' and Lucy (309). 'The world' assesses other's identity by 'pedigree, social position, and recondite intellectual acquisition' (309), but she argues that those elements are not useful to understand other's real character.

Lucy gets a chance to belong to a family of social position, but she throws away it spontaneously. M. de Bassompierre and his daughter, Paulina offers Lucy a job as a Paulina's companion. He promises her a higher salary than Madame Beck pays her, if she undertakes the job. However, she declines the offer of the better condition. She narrates that she is 'no bright lady's shadow—not Miss de Bassompierre' (298). She understands her nature and qualification, and realises that she cannot become 'foil of any gem, the adjunct of any beauty, the appendage of any greatness in Christendom' (298). She is content to work at Madame Beck's school because Madame Beck leaves Lucy free. They understand each other well, and Madame Beck ties Lucy 'to nothing –not to herself, not even to her interests' (298). Lucy realises that it is more suited for her to work without any shackles than to be 'foil', 'adjunct', or 'appendage' of a person in authority.

In addition, her rejection of the proposal by Mr. Home is relevant to her decision in her childhood that she does not depend on others. When she was in the Brettons in England, she was always calm. She frequently observed the movements of Graham, Paulina, and Mr. Home. Gilbert and Gubar find out Lucy's determination in her narration about Paulina.

> While Polly nestles under her father's cloak or Graham's arms for protection, Lucy sneers at the girl who must "live, move, and have her being in another" (chap. 3). […] Lucy seems determined not to exist in another's existence […][(18)]

Paulina is a typical woman of the Victorian era who cannot live without protection by

men, but Lucy does not desire the way of life like Paulina's. She always tries not to live under men's protection, but to be equal to them. Therefore, for her, it is intolerable to be Miss de Bassompierre's shadow receiving a high salary under the care of Mr. Home.

In Lucy's reject of M. de Bassompierre's offer, we cannot overlook a problem of Lucy's homelessness. M. de Bassompierre has an English name, Home, and it is certainly a metaphor of a home and family. His wife died long time ago, and he lives with Paulina. Because of the absence of his wife, it does not seem that the Homes is not a figure of a home. But when they visit the Brettons, they spend their time like a real family: a father, a mother, a son, and a daughter. In Villette, Lucy and the Brettons unexpectedly meet the Homes again, and since then, they often enjoy spending pleasant time together at the house of the Brettons. However, only Lucy observes them objectively, and feels 'as if [she is] placed in a false position' (284). She feels that she is out of place in the domestic atmosphere. She cannot belong to the two families.

The two English families, the Brettons and the Homes, indeed, become one family and start an ideal home by Graham and Paulina's marriage. After they have decided their marriage, Lucy happens to see the Brettons and the Homes at a park in Villette. She calls them 'a familiar and domestic group' (456). Lucy avoids the 'domestic group'. Even when Graham finds Lucy and tries to approach her, she stoops and turns. She 'would not to be known' that she is there (457). She keeps away from them because she understands well that she is not a member of the 'domestic group'. The two families with which she spent time together in England form a real home leaving Lucy alone like in her childhood. According to Anne Longmuir, 'Lucy's exclusion from the English domestic space both at home and abroad should be understood as a direct expression of her troubled national identity'.[19] Lucy cannot affirm her identity both in the English domestic space and in Villette. The marriage between the two English families reinforces her homelessness, and highlights her exclusion from the English domesticity.

Lucy, however, tries to make a home from scratch with Paul, though she does not belong to a prestigious family like the Homes. Paul has 'southern darkness which sp[eaks] his Spanish blood' in his face, but he does not elucidate his identity (321). He understands that 'nothing […] living in this world loves' him, so he is a lonely man (404). Like Lucy, he has no family and no friend. Therefore, he asks Lucy to become his

friend or his sister. She readily agrees to his request, and they gradually begin to trust each other. In the end, he proposes marriage to her, and they promise to get married. Yet, he leaves Villette to Guadaloupe, the West Indies. Before his departure, he gives her a school which she has desired to run by herself. He states that she must manage it steadily for three years until his return. She enjoys homemaking for three years waiting him, while she keeps the school. However, her homemaking is unwillingly discontinued because of Paul's death in a shipwreck. Finally, she cannot have her own home both in England and in a foreign country, though she emigrated to Villette to seek some sort of 'significance in her life'.[20] Gilbert and Gubar note that '[h]omeless, she is a woman without a country or a community, or so subsequent status as an immigrant would seem to suggest'.[21] Her emigration to Villette does not provide her what she wants, her own home with her future family. Her identity remains enigmatic from the beginning to the end of the story, and she cannot escape from her homelessness.

In the nineteenth-century modernizing and globalizing world, Lucy faces the problem of her national identity and is obsessed by the idea of 'home'. By contrast with other characters' distinct identity, the identity of Lucy, a cypher, is vague like a shadow. Although *Villette* seems to be released from obstinate Englishness which is a characteristic of *The Professor*, Lucy's Englishness is buried in Villette's cosmopolitanism. Brontë's hero and heroines in her other three narratives also have their firm identity as an English. Unlike Lucy, they are self-assertive, and possess power to resist oppression. In *Villette*, however, Brontë changed her writing style, and depicted a shadowy woman as a heroine. The obscurity overshadows the story like dark clouds, and it leaves some gloomy impression on the readers. The unsolved vagueness is an aspect of modernism which we cannot find in the contemporary works. The obscurity permeates *Villette* unlike in Brontë's other novels, and she suggests a new way of writing in Victorian realistic literature. We perceive how she foreshadows modernism in this experimental narrative.

Notes:

(1) Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, ed. by Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten, 3rd edn. (1853; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). All future references to this edition will be made parenthetically in the text.

(2) Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, eds, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 405.

(3) Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 177.

(4) Elizabeth K. Haller, 'Perception and the Suppression of identity in *Villette*', *Brontë Studies*. Vol. 35. No. 2. (2010), 149-159 (p.150).

(5) Gilbert and Gubar, p. 405.

(6) Gilbert and Gubar, p. 405.

(7) Clement Shorter, *The Brontës Life and Letters*. Vol. 2. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), p. 213.

(8) Shorter, pp. 215-6.

(9) Shorter, p. 216.

(10) Vlasta Vranjes, 'English Cosmopolitanism and / as Nationalism: The Great Exhibition, the Mid-Victorian Divorce Law Reform, and Brontë's *Villette*', *Journal of British Studies*. Vol. 47, No. 2 (2008), 324-347 (p. 329).

(11) Shorter, p. 218.

(12) Gilbert and Gubar, p. 405.

(13) Karen Lawrence, 'The Cypher: Disclose and Reticence in *Villette*', *Critical Essays on Charlotte Brontë*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 314.

(14) Pieter François, 'Lived Spatiality, Expectations and Travel Literature. The Construction of a Protestant Sphere in Belgium by British Travellers (1830-70)', *Power and Culture: New Perspectives on Spatially in European History*. (Pisa: Plus-Pisa University Press, 2008), 125-145 (pp. 129-30).

(15) François, p. 130.

(16) Lawrence, p. 314.

(17) Lawrence, p. 315.

(18) Gilbert and Gubar, p. 404.

(19) Anne Longmuir, 'Emigrant Spinsters and the Construction of Englishness in Charlotte Brontë's Villette', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, Issue 4.3 (2008) < http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue43/longmuir.htm > [accessed 24 November 2015]

(20) Lawrence, p. 314.

(21) Gilbert and Gubar, p. 405.